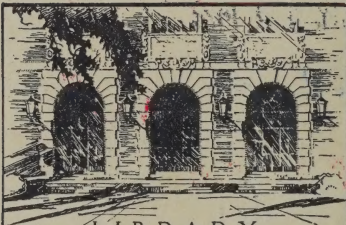


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AMERICA ARRAIGNED!

Edited by LUCIA TRENT and RALPH CHEYNEY



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AMERICA ARRAIGNED!

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Edited by

LUCIA TRENT

and

RALPH CHEYNEY

With an introduction by

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES



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DEAN & COMPANY

1928

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FOREWORD

THIS book is published with a three-fold function. It is a memorial tribute to Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, martyrs for world brotherhood and freedom. It is a protest against the rape of justice by Massachusetts in murdering these noble and innocent men and also by the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States and by President Calvin Coolidge in not interfering. We hope that it will serve likewise as a clarion-call to participate in the labor movement for which Sacco and Vanzetti gave up their lives on the electric chair and which alone can prevent the repetition of such a tragedy.

Before August 23rd, 1927, day of eternal shame to America, we sent part of the manuscript of this book to Sacco and Vanzetti and to Gov. Alvin T. Fuller accompanied by the following letter to the governor:

"In the name of the foremost poets of America we are sending you part of the manuscript of an anthology of poems protesting again the conviction and punishment of Sacco and Vanzetti, which will be published in the event that these men are not set free. These poems are an indication of the attitude of our poets in regard to this case. If these innocent martyrs are sent to the chair or to prison as victims of war hysteria, and every prejudice and force opposed to civilization, this book will live to cry shame on the justice of Massachusetts.

"Yours for American fair play."

Not Massachusetts alone must be held responsible, however, but the entire American empire. Calvin Coolidge might have intervened as did Woodrow Wilson in the Tom

Mooney case—and it is well to remember that Mooney and many other victims of frame-ups against labor are at this moment behind prison bars.

Though the editors alone are responsible for the selection of the poems which with Dr. John Haynes Holmes' stirring introduction constitute this volume, the following leaders of liberal and radical opinion stand sponsor for this venture of America's poets to put themselves on record against oppression in a case of world importance:

Forrest Bailey	Gardner Jackson
Harry Elmer Barnes	Robert Morss Lovett
Samuel A. DeWitt	John Dos Passos
Mary Donovan	Oswald Garrison Villard
John Haynes Holmes	Gremin Zorn
B. W. Huebsch	

The publication of this book would have been impossible without the generous co-operation of three loyal humanists, William Floyd and Helen and Benjamin Musser, to whom we gladly acknowledge our debt of gratitude.

Gratitude is due the editors of the following publications for permission to reproduce herein poems originally published in their pages:

The Citizen
The Commonweal
The Conning Tower of the New York World
Contemporary Verse
The Daily Worker
The Greenwich Village Quill
The Nation
The New Leader
The New Masses
The New Republic
The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse (Pamphlet)
Unity

In some thirteen days, at the close of a great tragedy and the beginning of a great awakening, America was hurled into a whirling vortex of forces which she is yet to understand. "The End and the Beginning," an analysis during the hours of final suspense of the personalities and factors at work in the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee of Boston, is by Jeannette Marks, professor of English literature at Mount Holyoke College, and author of the book Edwin Markham writes about as "that remarkable volume 'Genius and Disaster.'" One of the Sacco-Vanzetti poems in this Anthology, "Two Crucified," is by her . . . For "The End and the Beginning," James Oneal, editor of "The New Leader," and author of several books on the history of American Labor movements, among them "The Workers in American History" and "American Communism," has written an introduction re-stating and interpreting the main legal features of the Sacco-Vanzetti indictment and trial. In this volume, being published by the Vanguard Press, can be found the famous Address given by Mary Donovan at the close of the March of Sorrow on August twenty-eighth.

We wish space permitted us to pay tribute to the many men and women, both conservative and radical, who have sacrificed greatly to save the lives of these two men and American honor in the eyes of the world.

Lucia Trent

Ralph Cheyney

INTRODUCTION

ON April 15th, 1920, a paymaster and his guard were shot down in the streets of South Braintree, Massachusetts, by a gang of five gunmen, who escaped in an automobile with loot amounting to about \$15,000.

On May 5th, 1920, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, humble workingmen, both Italians, were arrested and charged with the above robbery and murder. From the moment of this arrest, unusual interest was aroused in the case—first, because of the peculiarly atrocious nature of the crime, and secondly, because of the unusual character of the accused.

Sacco and Vanzetti were quiet citizens, of good reputation. Sacco was an operative in a shoe factory who had an excellent record, and was trusted and highly praised by his employer. He had a home, a wife and family, a bank-account, a garden which was his delight. Vanzetti, a fish-peddler, traveled his daily route with his little wagon, well-liked by scores of householders, mostly of his own nationality, with whom he did business. Neither man had ever been convicted or accused of any crime.* In the three weeks intervening between the murder and their arrest, they continued to live quietly and work busily in the neighborhoods where they were known. No change of any kind in their conduct and appearance was ever reported. So far from attempting to hide themselves, both Sacco and Vanzetti were participating in preparations for a public meeting in which they would be conspicuous in an unpopular cause. Yet these were the men who were charged with committing in broad daylight, on a crowded street, a desperate robbery,

*The charge against Vanzetti for the attempted hold-up at Bridgewater on December 24, 1919 and his subsequent trial and conviction came *after* the arrest for murder.

carried through with such promptitude, efficiency and ruthlessness as to suggest inevitably the work of professional bandits.

There was another peculiar and unusual circumstance in the case. The late winter and spring of 1920 was the time of the famous deportation raids conducted by Attorney-General Palmer. Radicals of every description were being rounded up by Department of Justice agents, held under charges of one kind and another, and sent out of the country whenever possible. Now Sacco and Vanzetti were both radicals! They were members of the so-called Galleani group of anarchists who were being hunted by Palmer's lawless agents. One of the most prominent of them, Salsedo, had been seized in New York, and had either jumped or been thrown from a fourteenth-story window of the Park Row building, where he had been detained eight weeks. Sacco and Vanzetti, fearing immediate arrest and a like fate, had armed themselves; when suddenly arrested on May 5th, they assumed at once that they were being seized because of their radical activities. Nor were such fears and assumptions groundless, for an agent of the Department of Justice, Fred J. Weyand, has since testified on oath that "these men had nothing whatever to do with the South Braintree murders, and that their conviction was the result of cooperation between the Boston agents of the Department of Justice and the District Attorney (of Norfolk County, Massachusetts)."

It was facts of this description which aroused the interest not only of Sacco and Vanzetti's fellow-countrymen and fellow-radicals, but of certain men and women of liberal spirit who feared that injustice was being done under guise of law. As the case developed, especially during and after the trial at Dedham, interest was deepened and fear quickened among a growing number of persons who never before had become involved in such an affair. The case for the prosecution was obviously weak. The alibis of the defendants were impressive both in number and quality. The

judge, Webster Thayer, was bitterly hostile. The district attorney, Mr. Katzmann, was ferocious in his attacks on the prisoners. All sorts of extraneous facts, bearing directly or indirectly on the dangerous radicalism of the defendants and calculated to prejudice the hand-picked jury, were dragged into the court-room. The verdict of guilty left a settled conviction in the minds of thousands that Sacco and Vanzetti had been denied a fair trial, and that the sentence represented a gross betrayal of justice. Yet every effort for justice in the case failed.

Eight motions were made to Judge Thayer for a new trial, but this prejudiced man, in effect passing on his own bias as well as on the new evidence submitted, obstinately refused a re-opening of the case. Twice appeal was made from Judge Thayer's decisions to the Supreme Court of the state, only to reveal that the highest tribunal in Massachusetts could or would do nothing in the case. Amid growing alarm and indignation in the minds of millions of people the world around, the case was carried as a last resort to the Governor, Alvin T. Fuller, who associated with himself in a matter now become momentous beyond all expectation, an Advisory Committee consisting of Judge Robert Grant, President A. Lawrence Lowell, of Harvard University, and President Samuel Wesley Stratton, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. When the Governor, with unanimous advice of this Committee, refused to interfere, two facts became apparent. First, Massachusetts was determined to vindicate her law and assert her power, though innocent men were made to pay the price of death. Secondly, and in its larger aspects, this case was only a latest episode in the age-long struggle of the weak against the strong, the poor against the rich, the workers against the masters. When, on the night of August 22nd, 1927, amid a silence on Boston streets that seemed a world-wide hush of horror, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were burned to death in the electric chair, a new chapter was finished in the dark but heroic epic of man's ceaseless struggle against oppression.

The first reaction upon this legal crime was that of wrath, shame, pity, and overwhelming despair. Now that time has softened the passion of that midnight hour, there comes a sense of uplift.

The way those men endured the agony of their seven years torture, and the way at last they died! With what ecstasy was Vanzetti inspired, when he spoke those immortal words to the judge who condemned him:

"If it had not been for these things, I might have live out my life, talking at street-corners to scorning men. I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life can we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man, as now we do by an accident. Our words, our lives, our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belong to us—that agony is our triumph!"

For all our grief and horror, the example of such spiritual grace as this brought courage and new faith!

Then the protest that sustained the cause, if it did not save the lives, of these two men! There is a sense of justice in the world, after all. When two humble workers can so stir the hearts of men, we can still trust in humankind. When such an effort can be made to vindicate two unimportant radicals for the sake of abstract right, we may look to a brighter future. There is an end to this sort of thing. Some day man's spirit will master his institutions, man's sacrifice redeem society, and love at last be regnant upon the earth. I know that Amos saw a true vision when he foretold the coming of a time when "justice (should) flow down as water, and righteousness as a mighty stream," for in the Sacco-Vanzetti case I have felt the spiritual power of the awakened conscience of the race.

Lastly, the new mobilizing of conscience for the work ahead! "We have an idea," said the *Boston Herald*, a few days after the execution in Charlestown prison, "that the case will soon be over, and that the public here and abroad,

of every shade of opinion, will accept the result, and forget about it. The whole affair will then pass into history, not again to be heard from. . . ” Thus do the strong ever satisfy themselves that they can crush the poor and weak into oblivion. They kill the body, and think that therewith they are killing the soul. How mad their delusion! How ridiculous their complacency! For nothing lives so surely, so imperishably, so terribly, as injustice!

Chicago thought that the case of the Haymarket bomb-throwers would “soon be over” and men “forget about it,” when the anarchists had been tried and condemned, as Sacco and Vanzetti were tried and condemned, in a courtroom dominated by fear and hate, and at last, by due process of law, had been put to death upon the scaffold. But nothing could end the horror of that judicial crime. Men “of every shade of opinion” slept uneasily at night; they walked the streets distraught and fearful by day. The vision of these anarchists would not down. Their noosed bodies hung at every street-corner and in every doorway. And while all men were thus unhappy, some men were busy! These latter were determined to get at the truth, that the world might know and not merely suspect the horror that had been done. And at last, so clearly was the prejudice of the court established, so utterly the verdict of the jury discredited, so fully the innocence of the condemned vindicated, that an heroic Governor was moved to do the little that he could to correct the wrong, and thus restore the ways of justice to his state. The anarchists’ case was never, and will never be, forgotten. It is remembered, and will forever be remembered, for the noble action of Altgeld, and for the disgrace of Chicago and Illinois.

In the same way, France thought that the Dreyfus case would “soon be over,” and men “forget about it,” when the helpless Captain had been condemned as a traitor, and sent away to his living death on Devil’s Island. Nothing could be more complete and final than the destruction of this man—nothing more overwhelming than the power arrayed

against him. But the case lived on! The body of Dreyfus was in his tropic prison, but his spirit haunted the boulevards of Paris. One year, two years, three years, four years, five years went by, and still Dreyfus lived more terribly than ever. For all the passing of time, for all the power of army and state, that traitor-Jew on Devil's Island would not disappear. He had been banished from French soil, but nothing could avail to banish him from French minds. Then at last spoke Zola, who now, for this one heroic deed, lies buried in eternal glory in the Pantheon—and the case was reopened until justice was done. Dreyfus now lives in honor, and France forever hangs her head in shame.

But the perfect precedent is the Calas case in eighteenth century France, the case which Voltaire made immortal. The poor villager, Calas, was arrested, tried and condemned for the death of his son. Calas was a Protestant, his son had recently turned Catholic; this gave the Church the chance to charge murder when the boy's body was discovered. Calas was broken on the wheel, his property confiscated, his family driven as beggars on to the highroad. The priests patted unctuously their good round bellies, and knew that the case would "soon be over" and forgotten. But it was *not* forgotten! No man weaker than Calas; no institution more potent than the Church! But the rumors of this case traveled on the current of every river, took wings and flew on every wind. At last they came to the ears of Voltaire in Geneva, and aroused this man, already old, to the greatest work of his life. Voltaire made the Calas case his mission to his contemporaries and to posterity. He carried its story to every nation in Europe. He bombarded princes and bishops with the ceaseless fire of his wrath. Consumed himself with hatred of injustice, he resolved that the world should never sleep again until this crime had been corrected. Voltaire labored on this case for years; and in the end, as always, justice triumphed. Calas was vindicated, his family restored, and the case made memorable forever to the glory of truth and the shame of wicked men.

So, now, with Sacco and Vanzetti! "Massachusetts, there she stands"—triumphant, scornful, contented, bloody. She thinks her crime upon the innocent will be forgotten. Certainly she *hopes* it will be forgotten, for in her own heart she knows she has done murder. But deeds like this live on. There are those who would make them live, if they did not within themselves have the momentum of survival. For the universe, after all, is moral. A work of violence and horror, like that achieved upon Sacco and Vanzetti, disrupts the cosmic order, which itself must strive till it is whole again. The agitation for the release of these men, which began years ago, will continue, now that they are dead, for years to come, until at last the truth is known and heard. There are millions of men who will never forget, until Sacco and Vanzetti are justified. There are thousands of men who will never rest, until the work of justification has been carried through to its triumphant end. If these men reach not the goal in their time, they will teach the tale to their children, and pledge them to like service of the murdered dead. So will the story become a legend through all future time—the names, Sacco and Vanzetti, the perpetual symbols of victorious martyrdom.

This book is the voice of the poets. They have heard the cry of stricken justice, and have caught it up in words of prophecy and poignant song. Anger, pity, love speak in these pages. All men and women committed to the Sacco-Vanzetti cause must feel gratitude to the compilers of this anthology, Lucia Trent and Ralph Cheyney,* themselves true poets of prophetic vision, for gathering this chorus and thus adding to the volume of that mighty million-tongued voice which will "lift up like a trumpet, and spare not" till the "nation do righteousness, and forsake not the ordinances of justice."

John Haynes Holmes

*Ralph Cheyney has lost his position on account of his participation in this protest.

BEFORE GOV. ALVIN T. FULLER AND HIS AD-
VISORY COMMISSION REFUSED TO INTERCEDE

FOR THE 23RD OF AUGUST

These two sad men! The day we let them die
A little more of that will pass away
That was our soul. Our heavy earth-bound clay
Will loom a little darker in the sky.
Oh, few faint voices bravely asking "Why?"
You pass like whispers in the roaring play
Of madmen marching to a holiday.
We know. We know, why bound to death they lie.
Who thinks of them? The millions do not know,
And if they did, their souls would still be lamed.
The pride that once on Boston Common flamed
These many years is burning very low.
Nearer and nearer, ominous and slow,
Marches the death by which we shall be shamed.

—*David P. Berenberg*

THE WHITE TERROR

Before such men as you I stand
With head hung low, abashed, ashamed,
Not only of my Judas land
But that I also should be blamed.

That courts are owned by wealth and error
Is nothing new in history's pages;
And men who fight the armed White Terror
Must face their death while hatred rages.

But shame on folk of the printed word
Who raise no cry that rich men plunder!
Come, let our voices all be heard
In revolutionary thunder.

—*Ralph Cheyney*

THEIR WEAPON

"We are proud of death,"

Two men said;

"We are proud of death;"

When they are dead,

They shall be leaders

Greater far

Than the living

Ever are.

They shall sway thousands

With stopped breath,

With quiet hands.

If you give them death

You give a sword

For their hands to slay

All you hold dear and high

Some day.

—*Mary Carolyn Davies*

MUSING ON TWO MEN IN DEDHAM JAIL

You, in quiet courage
Have retained a freedom
Wider than the space
Where even the planets fret
Away their settled dooms.

You are the symbol
Of our servitude.
The bars that halt your flesh
Are stripes that sear
Their insolence and shame
Upon our souls . . .
Souls . . . Recurrent Christ,
Forgive the sacrilege . . . !

Souls are instruments of sense
Beyond the grunt of swine
Who snout the filth of pens
For sustenance.

Only souls can see
The vision founting from the eyes
Of one who dies
Quite firmly for a dream.

One Christ is worth
A thousand-fold
The craven multitude
He bleeds himself
To save.

And if you die,
Oh, do not say you gave
Your torchlike living
For our sodden selves

But slowly let us learn
How we
Who stood complacently before
Your piteous gaol
Had lost our liberty.

—*S. A. deWitt*

SACCO — VANZETTI

A cry of "red" affrights the rabbit court;
The Law runs, trembling, from a crimson rag.
Two souls must face the death-embracing chair
That judges, at their plush-lined clubs, may boast
Of how they sent the bloody Reds to Hell.

Sweet Justice bleeds upon the court-room floor,
While cringing jurors shake with hate and fear,
And trample in the stinking mud and filth
The name of their once glorious native state;
And grinning murder wears the garb of Law.

—*W. Wilson Manross*

SACCO AND VANZETTI

Who is it knocks upon the gate?
Who is it cries from fallen feet?
O brothers, let us not be late,
O warriors, stand against retreat!

The bloody ballad sings again,
And men are wasted by despair,
Lo, where the garrulous wings complain
In a cuckold-crowded air!

Dragging a noisome trail of wonder
The caravans of darkness drift
Against your brightening word of thunder,
O dawn-awakened ones, be swift!

Who is it knocks upon my heart?
They have debarred you, crucified!
Called you savage, and upstart,
Broken your teeth, and pierced your side.

Wide are the currents of your grief,
Deep upon deep your torment lies,
O tasters of the bitter leaf,
O runners where the summer dies!

—*Martin Feinstein*

TO SACCO AND VANZETTI

Because you believed
Man must win through to final perfect freedom;
Because you held
That justice should be done beneath the sky;
Because you knew
The desperateness of your cause, and yet dared fight for it;
Behold, we prosperous ones whose eyes and hearts are
 blinded,
In the name of the law, set forth our proclamation
That you shall shamefully die.

And is it not right,
Within this cage where gods and men alike are heartless,
Is it not fair,
Since greed and lust consume our hollow days,
Is it not clear
By the rules of this slaughterhouse where insects stir and
 couple,
That you who would not take life upon such terms,
Should have your lips contemptuously sealed to all our blame
 and praise?

—*John Gould Fletcher*

TO SACCO AND VANZETTI

The vision of your love, a current, streams
Forth from your prison, a magnetic pole,
Encircling every country, every clime,
And galvanizing every slothful soul.

Let your magnetic current burn away
All torpor, all indifference . . . let its heat
Scorch the false glitter and the vacant pride,
The arrogance of high and smug conceit.

Thus, Sacco and Vanzetti, may your words
Reverberate through every clime and mart;
There is no other nation but the race;
There is no other country but the heart.

—*Louis Ginsberg*

TRUMPETS AND DRUM

Sacco and Vanzetti,
You ransom us from sleep
Which manacles with fetters
That silent cravens keep.

You are the living trumpets
In lands where tyrants rail;
You know that freedom blossoms,
When freedom is in jail.

Thus blazoned to each conscience,
Your spirit's freedom tells
We are the ones in prison;
We are the ones in cells.

Your anguish is a banner;
Your pride it waves like flame;
For you, all tongues of rancor
Become the tongues of fame!

Sacco and Vanzetti,
You make the world your drum
To herald to the ages
Your glorious martyrdom!

—*Louis Ginsberg*

TO SACCO AND VANZETTI

In happier years you strove to find
A way of Justice for Mankind.
You gained instead a felon's cell
And death, perhaps, we cannot tell.

But this you've gained, a world aroused
Till Justice is once more espoused;
A world that angered through your cause
Demands revision of its laws.

So others need not share your fate,
Or die through prejudice and hate.
Now, by your case, all hearts are tried,
The friends of Truth are on your side.

What if the base outrank the true?
The ages still belong to you.
Your names a bugle-call shall be,
Till men shall flame to set men free.

You've shared the sufferings of the cross,
You've done your share, you've gained through loss
A place to live in hearts of men,
You've knit the ranks of Truth again.

So live or die, brave men, in peace!
A world will welcome your release;
Or, if you die, mankind will say,
"Two martyrs' crowns were won today."

—*Carolyn Leonard Goodenough*

THE NEW SALOME

O shall we call her Justice who demands
No scale but vengeance for her bloody hands?

Who lewd and shameless strips to dance before
The tyrant Prejudice like her who bore

John's guiltless head triumphant on a platter?
A sweet dish for the law! Is it no matter

That innocence is slain to make a prize
On which Hate's Harpy stoops to gormandize?

Yet, if she be not Justice, rip the veil
From the imposter's face—but do not pale

With thwarted rage nor choke with frightened breath
To see that phantom men call Death.

—*Ernest Hartsock*

JESUS ALSO SINNED

Visions forever dwell within the souls of men.
Forever pound upon Jehovah's land.
Ideas forever wake the earth
With re-echoing thunders.

When Jesus sinned against his fathers,
Brothers crucified him;
The bloody wound in his flesh
Became a banner for marching men.

Men march forever
Beating time
To tomorrow's hymn.

Tomorrow men will be one
With the earth and with heaven.

Men will lift
Red horizons above their heads
Replacing them with blue transparencies.

Trumpets
Will blast open
Forgotten graves.

And they will come forth
Who have died on the crosses;

The valleys will forget
The snow and the winters;
And the mountains will raise
Their trees to the unconquered skies.

—*Nicholas Moskowitz*

SACCO — VANZETTI

(From a Long Poem)

If you must die because from alien race
You bring a social redemption and rebirth,
Mercy must evermore conceal her face,
Justice and Truth must vanish from the earth.
If you must die, something will die in us
That fed itself to law; if you must die,
Death's womb will bear a scourge more perilous
To peace of Mammon than is anarchy.
You are a crucial case, decisive test,
Puppets in drama far beyond our ken;
And on you laboring immigrants will rest
Shambles for brutes, or betterment of men.

—*Benjamin Musser*

TWO IN THE DEATH HOUSE

Shall we "make heroes" of you—when all you ruminate,
Of songs, books, art, or the world's thought,
Hard-learned, meagerly fitting, like worker's clothes,
Askew upon you, might be talked out in one evening?
Of you—not having any bright possession, or good hope
of it,

Save what lies in two hands—hands cognizant
Of the cool feel of fish and of the grains of leathers,
Hands made stiff
In such plain service as men live by, yet despise the servers.

We cannot see, for those used hands, you are about to die . . .
Or we might find that in your eyes not to our liking, a dimmed
Opaque foreglimmering of a too imminent light
That may burn up, like some high-powered ray,
All that we have and are or may be, even . . . there is a
torsion in this thought

All our poor guerdons of posterity. I do not know
What you have given or withheld or hid deep from maraud-
ing death—

What gleams of your balked vision, whose harsh fire
May make men blind or mad, but never quite
Leaves eyes that it has once illumined, or what malfeasant
shapes

Conspire in the watched night, there cornered in your prison
house.

But this I know recurs:

old man with empty eyes,
eyes of an old doll
upon which the wax has melted,
out of the buzzing silence
blue-coated shapes,
well-filled and tight
as the bellies of blue flies,
staring out of their eye-places

at but not into your warm men's eyes
as they lead you out . . .

Hour by sleuth hour, till the cropped gold head
Of morning, shut outside the corridors, had turned to gray,
Their looks, infesting even the midnight, crept
Nimbly, along the flashlight's ray
And battened on you while you slept.

Seven times, ice-bearing days have shaken their white crops
upon the world
And forward airs have rumored of the loam at heat, down-
ward, over the coifed hills.

slim tongues of flame
licking at the iceheads,
about the plumed peaks
out of consuming snow
an invisible smoke going up
in the crystal silences
a silvery crying
of little waters set at large.

You have endured those moments, you
Close to the rough nap of earth, and knowing her perennial
ways.

And when, on some one of your counted mornings, light
That pulls at the caught roots of things
Has pierced you with a touch, or leavened air,
Too warm and softly mutinous for men to bear
Who knows that which you know, blows in and on you.
You too have hoped—with the ardor of young shoots, re-
nascent under the concrete,
And with them have gone down to defeat again.

You, Vanzetti, with the marching blue in your eyes,
And your smile a lonesome thing in the shadow of the death
house,
I think you know, for children know sometimes and child-
like men,

There are two lights that, running parallel, may flame—
Flame being one with flame and not with that it feeds upon—
Into one dazzling circuit. And meeting thus destroy
All that which lies between

Did not once a keeper turn, he too smiling a little,
He like you isolate, from you forever separate,
Only your smile, like a split ray of light, identical,
That for a moment trembles together, traversing the dark
impasse.

Did he fumble, missing a beat in the implacable rhythm, as
he turned the key,
As one letting fall a vessel might pause before stooping to
see if the pattern be broken.

Old patterns are not easily broken, inspired fishmonger,
Though "men about to die may be forgiven for plain speak-
ing"

And in your eyes that are intrepid without hate
And unwavering before oncreeping death, you yet hold your
captaincy.

—*Lola Ridge*

SACCO AND VANZETTI

Two simple men who loved the sun
Were sentenced to oblivion
For the thing they had not done—

Two simple men whose martyrdom
Was to be stricken blind and dumb
Because they prayed, "Thy Kingdom come!"

Yet did not merely pray, but spoke
The future's gospel, till they woke
Perhaps a score of working folk.

They spoke for human brotherhood;
They would not call red murder good;
When others crouched in fear—they stood!

They hated force of steel or stealth;
Love was their sun to bring men health;
They saw the world one commonwealth.

Within the world (that wild beasts' den!)
They spoke to wolves as if to men,
That Eden might return again.

In fear of truth and innocence,
Men silenced them with the immense
Irony of a vile pretence.

Men shut them from the earth and air
And sun that were so free and fair;
Seven years their warden was despair.

Trapped within stone they had to walk—
Death like the shadow of a hawk
Above them—while the lawyers talk—

Seven years their house was stone and steel,
While sick hope in recurrent reel
Whirled them like men strapped to a wheel.

The tribal victims of blood-lust
And all the cobwebs and the dust
Of judges legal and not just.

Tombed for lost years they had to lie
While the white Spring seven times went by—
Poor dead men who could never die!

Yet though they could not move but lay
Inert, they knew that every day
They stumbled down a steeper way—

Away from which they could not turn
Till down far vistas they discern
The sullen bulk of chairs that burn.

There in the darkness clear they saw
Engines of anguish and of awe,
The fiery guillotines of law.

They felt the iron cap whose chill
Is but a dam of ice to spill
The floods of fire that roar and kill—

The cap that pours into the brain
The livid needles of its pain
Till the blood boils within the vein.

They felt the fumbling trusties lock
The straps about them, while the clock
Beat the sick moments till the shock—

The moments that must have an end
When some white, unseen hand should send
The tides of fire to roar and rend—

Oceans of fire to stab and strain
Through ruptured channels of each vein
Till the skull bubbles with the brain.

*O Jesus Christ, our Master, you
Died that our love might save these two:
And still we know not what we do!*

—*E. Merrill Root*

PRISONERS

The powers that be
Must love thoughts of the gray skeletons
Of your hopes:
Ah, Sacco,
Ah, Vanzetti,
Though they chain your flesh
And thirst to drink your tears,
Even now they too, are prisoners
Bound by their lust for might.
And their imprisonment shall last
Through the length of years,
But you—
You shall lie in peace:
You must be free!

—*Blanche Waltrip Rose*

TALL WINDS SHALL WALK FOR SACCO AND VANZETTI

Tall winds shall walk across your dungeon bars,
And unseen trumpets on the darkness ride,
Invisible hands shall turn a key within,
Voices shall cry "Acquitted!" through the world.

Not easily shall this darkness be resolved,
Light from the breath of finer ethers drawn;
Yet shall it surely come, one with the suns and tides,
The appointed hour of slow, inevitable dawn.
Hour when the Shining Ones that now press heavily,
Weeping for "Stupor Mundi," through seven-veiled bands
of night
Shall be as those who pass to some bright festival.

Where are the keys that shall unlock your doors?
Whose is the hand shall smite to freedom's skies?
Know this, O held of a dark that is deeper than darkness:
By day and night they speed, the Unseen Messengers,
Hourly the Invisible Liberators of the skies
Work toward the will of Light.
Daily they gather in the sacred groves,
Burning the darkness . . . speaking a peace to men.

Only wait out the sodden, bat-eyed moments, wait;
High hearts, still bear the dungeon's stark indignity;
Time is a fountain for you, laving our air,
Time is a sword, brandishing truth in our faces,
Time is an army, driving the tyrannies out!

—*Mary Siegrist.*

MASSACHUSETTS 1667-1927

Old Granny Green in her garden plot
Hobbles and mutters, "Here's bergamot,
Marjoram, fennel, thyme and rue—
But I cannot see, as I used to do;
My hands are heavy, my bones are sore,
Yet folks still come to my cottage door
And ask for simples and herbs to heal,
Or a charm to make the coldest feel
The warmth of spring, love's eager pain—
Ah me, I would I were young again!
For 'tis cruel hard to grow old alone,
But I have my cat and my own hearth-stone,
And my bit of garden to love and tend—
But times are hard at the winter's end.

"Hark, up the road comes a merry shout!
My dull ears ring—'tis a noisy rout—
And what are they calling? 'Old Granny Green!'
'Yes, yes I'm coming.' (My apron's clean,
'Twill cover my ragged shift and gown.
Sure, 'tis gentry driving out from town.)"

She curtsied and smiled with her hand at her ear,
While her black cat purred, as the crowd drew near;
And then, as a stone flew swiftly by,
She crawled in the bushes to snarl and die.
"Old witch," one yelled, "You killed my cow!"
And another, "My daughter's at death's door now!"
While a third sent a stone with well-flung aim,
And she shrieked when it struck her—the old beldame!

They carried her down to the market-square,
And they burnt her old body to ashes there;
While Cotton Mather and all his kin,
Watched with a sanctimonious grin.

Ah, that was three centuries past, you say—
But is justice done in the world today?

—*Edith Lombard Squires*

HOW YOUR WORLD TREMBLES

Lovers, glide through your mirrored halls,
Or kiss a while by your garden walls,

Pink tea ladies with gold lorgnettes
Expatriate on your red sunsets.

Your way of life is any easy thing
Where one may chuckle and choose and sing.

In another world is an iron door.
Two men stare at a sullen floor.

Watch from citadels of ease
How your world trembles at men like these!

—*Lucia Trent*

THE CULPRIT

Where once, by Massachusetts bay,
On bloody Boston Common,
The Quakers went the hangman's way,
The "wrath of God" upon 'em;
And Salem's sombre judges raged,
Approved by law and jury,
And war against the witches waged
With Bible-nourished fury.

Again the court and state unite
To do the Devil's bidding;
With show of Justice and of Right
Their coward conscience kidding.
The whole world now the stage, whereon
They work their own undoing;
The very ghosts of ages gone
Today's hysteria spewing.

O, Massachusetts! ere the hour
Shall seal thy shame forever,
Stay thou thy mannikins of power!
And check their mad endeavor!
How shall they fear who face the chair,
Thorn-crowned, blood-stained, and sweaty?
Thou art the culprit, roped and bare!
Not Sacco and Vanzetti.

—*Robert Whitaker*

THE POETS TO SACCO AND VANZETTI

Not for you—
You are already deified—
But for ourselves we raise a lamentation

Not for you—
You are already crucified—
But for ourselves we beg a vindication.

We shall be forgotten
When the red dawn breaks;
You shall have begotten
Immortal stakes.

—*Gremin Zorn*

ON MEETING MISS VANZETTI IN PARIS

In my emotional life nothing has so impressed me as meeting in Paris Signorina Vanzetti just from her farm on her way across the Atlantic to meet her condemned brother in America. Her face was pale and tragic, and the purging of my feelings sped apace as though from the effects of Sophoclean art. She was clad in simple black, and seemed a rural not a regal Electra. Clytemnestra and her bloody mate had no part in that play; and there was none to put to death save that protesting pair far away in a prison ward. But Nemesis behind went up into the air.

—*W. P. Trent*

AFTER INTERCESSION WAS REFUSED BUT
BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION

A FINAL APPEAL

Winds of the world give answer,
Answer in sweeping song.
Winds of the world, we ask you.
How long? How long?

Seas of the shouting waters,
Instruments of Fate,
Seas of the dancing waters,
Shall we wait? We wait.

Stars of the heavenly scroll,
Many faced scroll called sky,
Answer, O cup of the night,
Must we die? We die.

—*Seymour Michael Blankfort*

THE CONDEMNED

Once you have killed these men, destroy their skin
And bone utterly and hide all vestiges
Of their existence. Let only nothingness
Remain of what your prisoners have been.
Permit their friends no grave to lay them in,
Brase their writings and their likenesses,
Forbid their names in all assemblages,
Cause them to be unmentionable sin.

For if anyone so much as named their name,
It would mean not them but you yourselves and shame,
And looking on their likeness he would see
Not them in prison cells but you and me—
And would find recorded on their graveyard stone
That the death we meant for them became your own.

—*Witter Bynner*

TO GOVERNOR FULLER AND HIS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

America is dead; her heart is stricken.

The state that bore her now has brought her death.
At your smug deed not only live men sicken;
Our patriot dead draw one hurt shuddering breath.

How will the future hold you slaves whose lust
Led you to rape your land, bring scorn upon her?
She yet may grow, reborn, from martyrs' dust.
But she lies dead. No land outlives its honor.

—*Ralph Cheyney*

NOT SACCO AND VANZETTI

These men who do not die, but send to death,
These iron men whom mercy cannot bend
Beyond the lettered law, what when their breath
Shall quietly and naturally end?
What shall their final retribution be,
What bloody silver then shall pay the toils,
Exacted for this legal infamy,
When death indicts their stark, immortal souls?

The day a slumbering but awful God,
Before time to eternity is blown,
Examines by the same unyielding rod
These images of His with hearts of stone—
These men who do not die, but death decree,
These are the men I should not care to be!

—*Countee Cullen*

OF SACCO AND VANZETTI

Who has been happy, tasting sunny fruits,
Or hearing summer hum her vast green song,
Or watching ocean tugging at its roots,
Or lying in quick arms when nights are long—
How shall he now bask in the honey hours,
Ask favors of his love or of his fate,
When, like a beast fondling what it devours,
Law slobbers justice—cold upon the plate.

Yet history knows: to every age, its crimes;
Empires half-fledged cannot be wholly wise.
We shudder, learning to endure our times,
And from the threatened flood avert our eyes.
Our senses will applaud the world again.
But who can clap life into murdered men?

—*Babette Deutsch*

ANOTHER PILATE

(*To Gov. Fuller on his Sacco-Vanzetti decision:*)

Another Pilate washed his hands and said:
The priests of gold are clamoring in my ear,
(And thinking of his politician's head)
I really see no cause to interfere.

—*William Closson Emory*

THE BALLAD OF CHARLESTOWN GAOL

1

There's a chair for you, Vanzetti,
In a cold and empty room;
A chair aloof and lonely,
Like a spectre in the gloom;
A chair with open arms and wide,
To welcome you to doom.

2

They've made this chair, Vanzetti,
Good men, and strong and true,
To manifest the will of God
On poor men such as you;
To show the Lord Christ lives again,
And dies, the Lord Christ, too!

3

In olden days, Vanzetti,
They used a cross instead;
They stretched a man upon its beams
By foot and hand and head;
And nailed him there with iron spikes,
Until his heart was dead.

4

But nowadays, Vanzetti,
Good men are very kind;
They offer you an easy chair,
To sleep, if you're inclined;
With nice electric batteries
To sooth an anxious mind.

5

Great Caiaphas is Christian, now—
He heeds what Jesus says;
And Pilate, who is civilized,
Does justice all his days;
And even executioners
Have sweet and gentle ways.

6

Yet cruel death is much the same
 In any modern city;
 The fires of fear and hate and lust
 Consume all human pity;
 And righteous mobs cry "Crucify"
 In Charlestown as in Calvary.

7

And after-death is much the same,
 For no men kill the soul;
 They rend and burn and crush the flesh,
 But leave the spirit whole;
 And then strange wonders come to pass
 That men cannot control.

8

The buried dead lie not in peace
 Within the quiet tomb;
 Their broken lives are quickened,
 They grope amid the gloom;
 And, sudden, they are born again
 From out a timeless womb

9

They rise, these dead and walk the earth:
 John Brown is marching on;
 Shrewd Socrates is teaching still
 How wisdom may be won;
 The shining Christ is yet a light
 For men to gaze upon.

10

They rise and shine, these noble dead,
 Like planets in the sky;
 They speak—and stricken nations hear
 The voice without reply;
 They live—and all the world beholds
 The life that cannot die.

11

There's a chair for you, Vanzetti,
 In a house where angels tread;
 A throne with thrones where sit the host
 Who judge the quick and dead;
 The martyr-host, whose sufferings
 Divide the good and bad!

12

Upon that throne, Vanzetti,
 You'll sit the ages through;
 And all the myriad sons of men
 Will stand, and look on you—
 The proud, to wither and bow down,
 The meek, to live anew.

13

Look up, look up, Vanzetti,
 Your chair is glowing bright;
 Your prison chamber, thronged with saints
 Who welcome you tonight;
 The forged lightnings of men's wrath,
 God's baptismal of light!

—*John Haynes Holmes*

Execution Day, August 22, 1927.

THE INFAMOUS RITUAL

The summit of our worship has been reached
and here upon this gangrene hill we stand
showing our blood-garnished teeth where touched
their sweet unwelcome flesh. Great God, thy hand
is opaque to all others' light. To us, O Lord,
it is a clear glass, and this was thy reward,
the toothsome sacrifice of these unwelcome kind
not ours, hence not worthy to the feast. See,
we have not slain them singly but in pairs,
we felt solicitude for even what was in their cry;
mercy we gave them, yea, what greater glory theirs
than to have been our holy unwelcome lust,
our pleasure and our appetite. And they who stood,
unwilling to forsake in us their trust,
beneath the sacrificial flame raising wrought arms
and voices, they are the unaccepted brotherhood
who gave us our little beauty and our only charms—
we have repaid them often with their proper place.
Ours is the dominance of claws and not the grace
of fingers; ours is not the sweetness of a hand.
Almighty Bludgeon, we have been taught to hide the
face when we have by thy might bestowed the wand.

—*Harry Alan Potamkin*

A HALF HOUR BEFORE THE EXECUTION OF SACCO AND VANZETTI

There will be no light
in a half hour.
The moon will lift cloths of white cloud
to her eyes,
and stars will slink
into the cheerless grottoes of the night.

In a half hour
there will be no sound.
Vallies will disband their far echoes
martialed on the distant slopes.
Mountains
will quiet their clanging cymbals of veined metal.
Trees, rigidly mute,
will be deaf to the wind.

In a half hour
life will falter and rot.
A pestilential rain will drive long fingers
to covet the buried seeds,
and green sprouts
will sicken upon themselves and die

This half hour raised upon eternity's breast
like a terrible dug for the whole world to suck
is shrivelled and the poisoned milk has coursed
into the measureless veins of the Unknown Mother

Molten streams
trickle into countless hearts
and black shells
sound the thin crackle of doom.
The very earth

quivers and splits
and there is only ruin at her heart

Women have not lost the ancient wail.

Ettore Rella

ON HEARING THE NEWS THAT GOVERNOR
FULLER SANCTIONED THE MURDER OF
SACCO AND VANZETTI

I love the forests of the lightnings, where
White-hot and terrible trees with purple boughs
Shake down the rain, like wild leaves, thru the air
And then fall crashing on the mountains' brows.
The storm without me is the storm within:
The lightnings make white forests in my soul:
Within my spirit roars earth's stress and din:
Within my mind the mightier thunders roll.
Fall, fall great livid sky-upholding trees!
Fall, fall and shatter all our human world!
Fall like doom's conscious Caryatides
And let high heaven to deep hell be hurled.
Crush man, the angel with the maggot's brain:
Crush man, the idiot ape, the spawn of Cain!

--E. Merrill Root

GENTLEMEN OF MASSACHUSETTS

Understand this, you bleak-hearts, you gray imposters, you
wisps, you spectres, half-born, death-elected;

*No man votes death to another; self-given, that cup, and
you—*

Seven years we pled and pled with you; we said:

“This blood you crave is poison, this for you and yours the
final, steep

“Gulf to oblivion, why so fast, old apes? The tiger Tomor-
row has smelled you, the sky

“Breeds vultures, though you sow a hundred Christs on every
hill

“Death is your harvest, it will not be long.

“Because the fish peddler sang as he brought the sea’s gifts
to the people—

“Because the shoe-maker laughed as he nailed a new last
in the sky—

“God, how you bayed in the fouled mangers of your courts,
your clubs, your counting houses!

“God, how you wolfed the lean bone of your nothingness!”

Now it is done; the fish peddler goes free; the shoe-maker
walks well shod in a temple you cannot defile.

I think you will be quiet a little now; deaf old men soon
learn not to speak much.

Scarcely you chose at all, every man to his poison and yours
has been a long time brewing.

We, who heard the death rattle, might have spared our pains.

The wheel turns; gentlemen, I think the earth is a little sick
of you.

Brown men, yellow men, black men, women and little naked
children will walk these lanes

Have you not seen how the sick fields welcome the new
blood?

Be quick, the old lilacs, the wild indifferent laurel will feed
on your bones.

Be quick, I would not have one laurel bell less pink for your
delay.

—*James Rorty*

TO BISHOP LAWRENCE

(On His Congratulatory Telegram to Gov. Fuller)

You call yourself a follower of Christ,
Who chuckled when these men were sacrificed?

You dare to preach of Jesus on the cross,
You who have sanctioned the unholy loss

Of two brave lonely dreamers who have stood
Like Him for peace and brotherhood?

Go hide your face among the Pharisees,
Who always have condemned such Christs as these.

Go hide your face among the world's disdained!
Your hands are leprous and your vestments stained.

—*Lucia Trent*

TO PRESIDENT LOWELL AND HIS COMMISSION

Oh, let us not be bitter against foes
Of right, too base to bear the name of men.
How blind and pitiful you are, God knows,
Herded like common swine within the pen
Of your class prejudice and coward fears.
Our bitterness would sear our tongues in vain
For now no lips of passion and no tears
Can heal two lives of this deep-thrusted pain.
Thank God, dark earth is mothering and kind,
Kinder than your low court and prison den.
You cannot kill the dream of those who find
A faith that shall restore the world to men.

—*Lucia Trent*

GOLGOTHA IN MASSACHUSETTS

Not even two thieves to grace this slow murder.

Instead, two innocent dreamers, in place of one
Tortured for seven years, a hell harder

Than the crude spitting and flogging of Mary's son.
And the end either the leaping, rending spark
Or longer commuted torture . . . all to please

Those who herd men into a fouler dark,
Heedless of the heaping agonies,

For gain . . . for dividends . . . for prosperity.
For a world where a Coolidge or a Harding primps,

And iron rule and rigid authority
Are in the dollar, and its plump pimps,

Until that shrieking hour when a new sky

Echoes their screams, as the people shout: Crucify!

—*Clement Wood*

AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION

WHO ARE THE CRIMINALS?

Massachusetts, with solemn pride,
Upheld her courts; and two men died.

The brazen state house on the hill
Shrieked to the world her right to kill.

Massachusetts squared her jaw
And loosed her holy hounds of law.

Shrewd dogs are they who know red bait,
Well-trained for punishment and hate.

The judges, rulers, rich men smile,
And silk-gowned ladies feast in style.

To such what means the awful chair?
Or whether trials are just and fair?

Cruel men, beware! The Christs you kill
Will walk in power with us still!

Within your room of harnessed fire
You have built a mighty martyrs' pyre.

By the great Grand Jury of Mankind
You stand condemned as fools and blind.

Your folly proves a turning key
To set the hordes of the crushed ones free!

—*Vincent G. Burns*

ONCE MORE, O COMMONWEALTH!

(August 23, 1927)

Rise up, old ghosts, you dead and dumb,
To see where the scholars and judges come!—
Living and eloquent they bear
New witness to your ancient care:
They have come in their robes and piled the pitch,
They have burned their witch, they have
 burned their witch.

Go back to your graves, you dumb and dead.
There are other judges in your stead
Whose hearts, while you lie under sod,
Are bounden to your jealous God,
And you and they have eased your itch,
You have burned your witch, you have
 burned your witch.

—Witter Bynner

JUSTICE IS DEAD

"Judge Thayer boasted of what he would do to the 'anarchistic bastards' "—From an affidavit alleging prejudice of trial judge in the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

Toll the bells for Justice. . . .

Justice is dead!

Cowards hold the scepter

Over her head;

Hatred holds the balance,

Vengeance is the cry:

"Kill them without mercy;

Let the bastards die!"

Toll the bells: the judgment's

Cruelty stands;

Pilate, blind and groping,

Washes his hands.

Prejudice has triumphed,

Triumphed in its lust;

Hope is bruised and bleeding,

Trampled in the dust.

Ring the bells for Freedom!

Truth is not dead:

Love still weaves its garland

Over her head.

Legal crucifixion

Done by little men

Cannot vanquish Justice—

It shall rise again!

—*Harold D. Carew*

RED FLAG

This is no time for tears, no place for mournful poses.
We have a trust to fill before our brief day closes.

A hundred thousand Saccos and Vanzettis starkly die
Whose agonizing arms accuse the stormy, bloodied sky

On battlefields, in dismal mills and dank, dark mines
In fetid tenements and on brave, far-flung picket-lines.

Whence comes the hue that stains the workers' flag so red?
The rich have dyed it deep with the blood of our slaughtered
dead.

It is they who have sown the tempest, they who have made
it war.
Our children shall win to freedom; theirs shall pay the score.

—*Ralph Cheyney*

AFTER THE MURDER

They are not dead while still there beats
One heart that freedom's blood has stirred;
While still amid the dolts and cheats
One cry in justice' name is heard.
Go, Massachusetts! fouled and shamed,
Go hide your desecrated head;
Bury the past you have defamed:—
Your hounded victims are not dead!

—*Miriam Allen deFord*

PRAYER IN MASSACHUSETTS

Upon this soil may no tree ever grow.
In this land may no lips ever again
Speak the word justice, now that all men know
Those lips have long boasted and in vain
May never young men hither come to learn
What cruel elders have no power to teach
May no lights burn here save witch fires that burn
Along some desolate and abandoned beach.
May this dour land go back now whence it came—
To early granite, to implacable sea.
May there descend on it the cleansing flame
Of some remote supreme catastrophe
Divorcing it forever with its shame
From men who would be generous, wise and free.

—*Arthur Davison Ficke*

LEST WE FORGET

("Now that the Sacco-Vanzetti case is a closed incident, let us turn our thoughts to other things more vital to the nation's welfare. —News Item.)

Now that the trial has ended,
And the execution is o'er ;
Let us return to our business,
Talk of the thing no more,
File it away in the records,
Dead men's ashes won't speak ;
Turn to tomorrow's problems,
"Who'll win the fight next week?"

Drink with the judge at the clubhouse,
Styme his ball on the links ;
Escape from the inquisition
Of the mind that unceasingly thinks,
Some things are better forgotten,
The clamor for justice dies ;
Conscience is eased of its mission,
If only the ghosts won't rise.

But some of us can't forget it,
By the bitter pain we shared,
By our high hopes disillusioned,
By the faith that was not spared ;
By the questions still unanswered,
By the challenge still ignored,
We've lit a flame within our hearts,
A beacon of the Lord.

So keep us, keep us, Justice,
Forever toward that Light ;
Keep us we pray from slipping
Back to that deadly plight ;
Where buoyant doubts lie buried,

And rebel hearts must beat,
To the tune and rhythm set them
By tradition's lagging feet.

—*S. Ralph Harlow*

DEATH WATCH

(*Midnight, August 22nd, 1927*)

We sat in silence so profound
As Death's hand loosed the bars;
It seemed as if our spirits too
Went out beyond the stars.

We wondered why one after one
The Pilates turned from plea
That never was refused by Him
Who walked in Galilee.

And when will this be clear to us
Across the fleeting ban;
That we may learn from simple men
Of Brotherhood to Man?

—*Mary Plowden Kernan*

AUGUST 22nd: A RED-LETTER DAY

I'm goin' to buy myself a bloomin' flag
An' wave the stars an' stripes over my head!
Make way for me an' my old rusty nag,
For once I'm patriotic, I see red!
Haven't you heard the news, you starin' sheep?
Sacco an' Vanzetti will hang today!
That's right, fall in behind, let no man sleep—
My Country 'Tis of Thee—harrah—hooray!

Down with the bloody little murderers—
Who do them goddam dagoes think they are?
Off with their heads—an' if their friends are sore—
Off with theirs, too—the dirty foreigners!
An' while we're at it, raise this day on high—
Let's nail it up beside the Fourth o'July!

—*Alfred Kreymborg*

MURDER AT MIDNIGHT

In Memoriam Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Betrayed and Murdered In The American Class War, August 22, 1927.

I.

"Both are dead."

Dead.

Press the button. Turn on the juice.

Dead.

Waiting, waiting.

For what?

Two wops to sit down in a chair

And be dead.

Show's over.

Time to go home, go to bed.

Time to forget, put it out of your head.

Dead.

(Death. Grim Reaper. Symbolic. Cloak. Hood. Scythe.
Skull.)

Dead.

Both.

I walked out into the huge soft night.

No light.

Someone had strangled the stars.

II.

Seven years to make a shroud.

Seven years to make it strong enough

To hold the whole of life.

(Wonder how long it takes to make an electric chair?)

Seven years for two wops.

Dying.

Dead.

"Massachusetts is too proud——"

Seven years to make a shroud.

III.

CITY
JAIL
HUNGER
WORKER
SUBWAY
DEMPSEY
BABE RUTH
JESUS
STRIKE
STARVATION
MURDER
DEATH

IV.

Three men in frock coats playing dice.
Three men and a fourth playing with skulls.
Fingers weblike and precise.
Caressing calmly the fluttering dice.
Harvard accents glide like gulls
From lips like nooses hard and strong.
What are the stakes? How long, how long?
Four men in frock coats playing dice.
Dice. Are they loaded?
Loaded. Bloated.
Four bloated frock coats playing with skulls.

V.

And on two faces hangs the mask
Of the immobile anguish of the years.
This is the honorable task
Of those unbitten by subtle doubts or fears.
Climb, you lousy wops, into your holes.
The god of the Fullers and Thayers will care for your souls.

VI.

Nights are made black for deeds like this.
Nights are made black, muffled and secret.
Press the button. Turn on the juice.
Show's over.

And the corroding dawn,
Waiting,
Steals like a thief, trembling and ghastly white,
Through the thick, bolted night.

The job is done.
Whistles shriek in factory and mill.
And the implacable sun.
Climbing,
Hangs splendid and terrible and still.

VII.

Go back, slaves, go back.
Go back to the factories, the dancing machines.
Go back, dancing slaves.

Noon.
(The sun is a big round brass spittoon.)
Life seethes, blown up.
Collapses like a pricked balloon.
Night.
"Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves."

VIII.

Too intolerably blue, empty, shining, remote the sky.
Too intolerably serene, calm the tall, greatwinded trees.
Too green every leaf, every grass.
Seared by no sadness, no blight even of the cool keen panting
autumn,

The brown stain of the taking away.
Nothing to mar, no hunger of stamped-out growing, no cry
Out of denial.

Trees lift strenuous leanness, raise petulant hands, drag
darkness
To them.
Nothing, nothing to mar.

IX.

Each sound is their sound.
Life demands life.
Beyond the pathos and the pain
That humans martyr humans with
Their blood shouts over all the earth.
Blood, red blood.
My brothers' blood is on my hands.
My brothers' agony burns my flesh.
Agony. Blood.
On my hands.

X.

Pity the wretches that will sit in the cells
Of Charlestown and of Dedham Jails.
Pity the poor stiff that will come after
To live a while in those exquisite hells,
To live and hear always two voices, always the tread
Of feet always, always dead.

Pity the fellows that will scrub the floors and walls
Of Charlestown and of Dedham Jails,
And never be able to wash away
The great trembling stain
Of Sacco's and Vanzetti's pain
("The men of this dying old society they brutally have pulled

me away from the embrace of your brother and your poor mother.”)

Pity the rats that will gnaw the moldy crumbs
Of Charlestown and of Dedham Jails,
And smell the smell of their blood
And gasp.

(“I would not wish to a dog or to a snake, to the most low misfortunate creature of the earth—I would not wish to any of them what I have had to suffer for things that I am not guilty of.”)

Pity them, pity them all.

XI.

Sacco And Vanzetti Must Not Die!
Shrill signs hurl the workers' cry.
Strike. Protest. Telegram.
Massachusetts doesn't give a damn.
A million-throated workers' crying.
Sacco and Vanzetti dying, dying.
Sacco and Vanzetti dead.
Dead.

WE SHALL NOT SOON FORGET!

XII.

Hang up your justice on the sour-apple tree of your pride.
Hang it up, I say, for vultures to feed on
For soft worm fattening, for the gladdening of all gnawing,
ravenous things.
Hang it up where its resonant stink will fill every corner and
crack of the earth.
Swing it, swing it.
Hang up your justice on the sour-apple tree of your pride.

—A. B. Magil

TWO CRUCIFIED

(After Midnight, August Twenty-second)

O Jew Jesus, Jew Jesus,
Down from your tree again!
The wind, the wind, the wind, the wind,
Whirls with a dove in pain.

O Jew Jesus, Jew Jesus,
Great fellowship for you!
The peace, the dream, the hope, are here—
See what these poor doves do!

O Jew Jesus, Jew Jesus,
Wings in a world of love!
The wind, the wind, the wind, the wind,
Cries like a bleeding dove!

—*Jeannette Marks*

GRIST

Now we go down the years dry eyed with hate,
Never again the tears of little woes
Shall blind the hard and arid sight of those
Who know that human laws can never wait—
But kill as surely as the water flows.
Never again the hope that any fate
Can stay the death of words that came too late,
And purge us of the bitterness that knows
The certain way that empty justice goes.

—*Kathleen Millay*

JUSTICE DENIED IN MASSACHUSETTS

Let us abandon then our garden and go home
And sit in the sitting room.
Shall the larkspur or the corn grow under this cloud
Sour to the fruitful seed
Is the cold earth under this cloud.
Fostering quack and weed, we have marched upon but cannot
conquer ;
We have bent the blades of our hoes against the stalks of
them.
Let us go home and sit in the sitting room.

Not in our day
Shall the cloud go over and the sun rise as before,
Beneficent upon us
Out of the glittering bay,
And the warm winds be blown inward from the sea.
Moving the blades of corn.
With a peaceful sound
Forlorn, forlorn,
Will stand the blue hay rack by the empty mow ;
And the petals drop to the ground,
Leaving the tree unfruited,
The sun that warmed our stooping backs and withered the
weed uprooted.

We shall not feel it again.
We shall all die in darkness and be buried in the rain.
What from the splendid dead
We have inherited
Furrows sweet to the grain, and the weed subdued
See now the slug and the mildew plunder.
Evil does overwhelm
The larkspur and the corn ;
We have seen them flounder.

Let us sit still
Here in the sitting room until we die.
At the step of Death on the walk rise and go,
Leaving to our children's children this beautiful doorway,
And this elm.
And a blighted earth to till
With a broken hoe.

—*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

It is a great grief that your book will contain no verses from me in tribute to those two brave and gentle spirits, Sacco and Vanzetti, whom for seven years I have tried to do my small part in saving from judicial murder. I am ailing in body and mind and have not today whatever power over words I had when I wrote "The Lynching Bee." But can you not incorporate this note in your book? I would not seem by silence to give consent to this terrible deed—terrible for its social implications of contemporary upper class stupidity and smugness, even more than for its fierce moment of injustice and cruelty. Let my feet and face stand with the rest of you, even though my lips are shut. There, in that company, my very silence will speak.

—*William Ellery Leonard*

THE MEETING

The blackness faded, the day was breaking,
The road ahead was strange and bare.
"Welcome, Sacco! Welcome, Vanzetti!"
Cried three who met them there.

"Like you," said the old man, "I died for justice."
"Like you," said the young man, "for brotherhood."
"Like you," said the woman, "I died for heeding
The voice of the highest good."

"We all have known the crowded courtroom,
The lying charge, the doom of death,
We have known the loneliness, the darkness,
The pang of the parting breath.

But men learn slowly, comrades, slowly;
Many must yet be sacrificed
To teach them righteousness, love, and justice"—
Said Socrates, Joan, and Christ.

—*Miriam E. Oatman*

THEY ARE DEAD NOW

This isn't a poem

This is two men in grey prison clothes.
One man sits looking at the sick flesh of his hands—
hands that haven't worked for seven years.
Do you know how long a year is?
Do you know how many hours there are in a day
when a day is twenty-three hours on a cot in a cell,
in a cell in a row of cells in a tier of rows of cells
all empty with the choked emptiness of dreams?

Do you know the dreams of men in jail?
Sacco sits looking at the sick flesh of his hands—
hands that haven't worked for seven years

remembers hoeing beans at twilight in his garden
remembers the crisp rattle of the edger
remembers the mould of his wife's back
fuzziness of the heads of kids.
Dreams are memories that have grown sore and festered,
dreams are an everlasting rack to men in jail.

Vanzetti writes every night from five to nine
fumbling clumsily wittily with the foreign words
building paper barricades of legal tags,
habeas corpus, writ of *certiorari*,
dead spells out of a forgotten language
taken from the mouths of automatons in black.

They are dead now
The black automatons have won.
They are burned up utterly
their flesh has passed into the air of Massachusetts
their dreams have passed into the wind.

"They are dead now," the Governor's Secretary nudges the Governor,

"They are dead now," the Superior Court judge nudges the Supreme Court judge,

"They are dead now," the College President nudges the College President,

A dry chuckling comes up from all the dead:

The white collar dead; the silkhatted dead; the frockcoated dead

They hop in and out of automobiles

breathe deep in relief

as they walk up and down the Boston streets.

These two men were not afraid

to smell rottenness

in the air of Massachusetts

so they are dead now and burned

into the fierce wind from Massachusetts.

Their breath has given the wind new speed.

Their fire has burned out of the wind

the stale smell of Boston

Ten thousand towns have breathed them in

and stood up beside workbenches

dropped tools

flung plows out of the furrow

and shouted

into the fierce wind from Massachusetts.

In that shout's hoarse throat

is the rumble of millions of men marching in order

is the roar of one song in a thousand lingo.

The warden strapped these men into the electric chair

the executioner threw the switch

and set them free into the wind

they are free of dreams now
free of greasy prison denim
their voices blow back in a thousand lingoos singing
one song
to burst the eardrums of Massachusetts.

Make a poem of that if you dare!

—*John Dos Passos*

SACCO-VANZETTI

What!—set adrift in dark of sudden death
These humble toilers for the daily bread
Of wife and children? How—when they are dead—
Should God be answered for their stolen breath?
Could late remorse, or rite, or any wreath
Redeem hard judgment, iron hand, blind head
That balanced Wealth with Justice, and then said:—
“Because they menace Mammon, it is . . . death”?

Bewildered aliens—knowing little law;
(Our many laws *we* mostly disobey!)
But human—so believing no base flaw—
Should blot from them the light of Freedom’s day—
Though they *had* been misled to such misdeed,
Remember: Capital’s *pet* jail birds—*freed*!

—Alice N. Spicer

THE WAY

Pass not too near these outcast sons of men
Where walked the Christ ahead! lest you, too, share
The rabble's wrath! in time take heed! beware
The shame—the bitter woe of Him again!
Your flaming zeal speak not so rash—so loud!
Pass on your prudent path within the crowd.

What if they mark you of His band? and cry:
“Behold this one, as well!” ah—you should know
The jeers—the stones, for all that with Him go!
Have caution, fool! let others yearn and die!
These broken ones you love with hot heartbreak
Can save you not! be warned by His mistake!
Remember how He spurned the risk and loss!
Remember how they nailed Him to a Cross!

—*Laura Simmons*

TO GOV. ALVIN T. FULLER

(August 23, 1927)

And now the awful deed is done, wash well your hands
Before the mob; can you not see
The Nazarene go forth at your commands
And climb again to Calvary?
Snug and content you sleep tonight while he
Is writhing on the cross again.
Hear how the mob shouts at his agony;
Hear how a few weep at his pain.
How will it be with you in that red dawn
When we shall scale the walls of hate and fear,
When those you killed shall be again reborn
With all the truths they held so dear?
Pilate, you have steeled our hearts and cleared our eyes
To meet the morning light as darkness dies.

—*Max Press*

FOR A LAND THAT ALLOWS SACCO AND VANZETTI TO DIE

From heaven what sign?
What writing on the wall?
What whisper running along the wind that power and pride
shall fall?
Assyria lies barren, the might of Egypt is a whirled simoon
over deserts, the Persian hosts.
Fell behind tumbling waters, and Greece is a story told, and
sounding Judea
Lives in a dying book, and Rome was proud of its world
dominion, the haughty hidalgos of Spain
Have gone with their Inquisition; mighty nations have gone
Up roads of pride and splendor past memory of their start,
past chiding recollection
Of simple things and honest ways and surging force of
spirit—spirit's a word they deny, a myth to them, a
delusion
Their science and power and growth have parted from, have
surpassed—their one salvation,
Pride: To stand in the ways of truth that lead past public
scorning.
Power: To be gentle as the mountain breasted with pine
and crested with snow, calm as justice opening her
eyes, serene
As laying of fingers on the new born. Have ye this power,
this pride, O Nation of Nations? O ye in your turn.
For a space overgrown, three-bellied lord of the earth, with
brazen bowels and feet of tempered steel and head
Bent ground-ward from habit of search for gold and oil!
Have ye mole's eyes? Look up—will the sun blind
ye? Can ye look upon man
Nor be ashamed? Will your kind know ye? Already the
whispers, the squirrels through the forests of the mind
Telling their brethren the tale, beyond fear and hate to a
pity, as for the eagle dying, as for a land once great

Turned by its splendor from truth, won by its wealth from
justice, swaggerly blindly
To its doomed end. What have ye of worth, O my country,
what hidden well of spirit, with breath
Of humility astir in your lungs, softly, what steel rod of
wrath ejecting the wrong
As the ramrod, the powder—what fire to eat the poison
though half your glory burn—my country!—

—*Joseph T. Shipley*

DEAD — THEY LIVE

Their spirits march to no slow drums of death.

Let fall no tear! Their bodies have been slain—
Their spirits freed by one hot blasting breath,

Now march with those who have not died in vain

Unloosed from narrow prison cells they go

With giant strides through all the earthly lands,
Red banners flaunt about them, and to show

The way bright torches flame in mighty hands.

They're marching, marching, marching in the night.

Unshackled now they move with steady tread
And eyes that glance neither to left nor right

Within the ranks of labor's martyred dead.

Lift high the crimson banners! Lift the torches!

Two staunch recruits have joined this army brave
To shining goals that ever steadfast marches,

Defying now the prison and the grave!

—*Henry Reich, Jr.*

NOW DEATH IS KING

(*To Sacco and Vanzetti*)

Now death is king and death's cadets
are seated in the high places
let honest men look to their souls
for we are fallen on evil days.

When justice owns herself a whore
and panderers sit upon the bench
and shepherds of our youth by day
turn death's procurers in the dark
let honest men look to their souls.

Let us look to our souls I say
and cast the ghastly reckoning
of all our sloth and heart's decay
for we are fallen on evil days.

Not theirs the cross were crucified
nor yet Pilat's or Pharisees';
in the calculus of God
Christ and Judas cancel out

In one apocalyptic flash
that we the quick may live to see
how death is king and his cadets
are seated in the high places.

Oh, honest men look to your souls
treasure the shame and agony
and note how from our stagnant depths
has sprung the common enemy
now we are fallen on evil days.

—*Edwin Seaver*

HARVEST

(In the first few minutes of August 23rd, 1927 there were four executions in Boston, Massachusetts. Those murdered at this time were Madeiros, Sacco, Vanzetti, and a pathetic little hunchback, Justice.)

How did we lose the road and reach this jungle?
How did we ever find our way to this?
Follow the brook, they said, it's bright and clear
And you'll be safe from swamp and precipice.

How could we know that some more wise than God
Would dig canals and tamper with the brook,
Bending it back until it met itself,
The thing was never said in song or book?

How could we know that forced into a ring,
We would be left in jungles, black and tall,
The brook, encircling all our tangled lives,
Swelling to overflow and drown us all?

How could we know that helpless in the net
Our kin and kind had spun we'd feel the thong
Of some small cricket chirping on a twig,
"Life is gay and man is never wrong."

—Josiah Titzell

PEDDLER

(If it had not been for these thing, I might have live out my life, talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. . . —Vanzetti to Judge Thayer.)

But for these things I might live out my life
On corners telling pale, disheartening slaves
Diluted truths. I might proclaim that strife
Of man with man is sin, that justice waves
A ragged cloth and holds unbalanced scales.
To die unmarked, unknown, was my poor lot;
But for these things my words were foolish tales
A peddler tells to men about to rot.
By dying I have trimmed a smoking lamp
That still lights footsteps down a narrow hall;
My pain has been sustaining fuel in damp,
Unlovely places where the ghastly pall
Of hopelessness is cast. My spirit sings,
For in my tomb a broken lantern swings.

—Bethuel Matthew Webster, Jr.

SACCO AND VANZETTI

- Is it death to endure in the thoughts and the hearts of millions of men everywhere?
- Is it death to uphold, stimulate, and inspire, confidence in eternal truth-values?
- Is it death to so terrify power entrenched that its cohorts must murder to govern?
- Is it death to re-vivify laws of creative ideals, for re-birth, ever healthy and virile?
- Is it death to face death with that calmness of surety knowledge of innocence brings?
- Is it death to await with love toward the killers, having no word of hate for the tyrants?
- Is it death to so challenge the thought of the living that thoughtless ones think and thought-precedents crumble?
- Is it death to remodel ideas extant so that even conservatives listen?
- Is it death to promote these ideas into actions, not alone by the one, but by thousands?
- Is it death to stand firm when the storm of negation would break positive corner-stones?
- Is it death to remind progeny of rebellion that rebels are forebears of freedom?
- Is it death to raze barricades, climate, class, race, which so long have obstructed thought's travels?
- Is it death to precipitate friendships, unknown, between these who, alive, are remote from each other?
- Is it death to establish pass-words and pass-ports which the future requires at its portals?
- Is it death to re-focus the eyes of the living to see coming turn-stiles and levels?
- Is it death to re-propagate timeless, and mutual, light-giving fire, recognizable to all the living?

No! All these achievements are Life! Life full-robed in the
splendor of dawn and the morrow!
Death comes but to those who so stupidly try to own night-
shrouds for yesterday's coffins!
Life owns nothing, gives all, and blossoms wherever new
dawns are expected and morrows elude all possessors!

—*Alice Riggs Hunt*

Barbara

Rose

Allen

3	1
5	3
7	5

2

19

Barbara

Rose

Allen

4 12

6 14

8 16



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